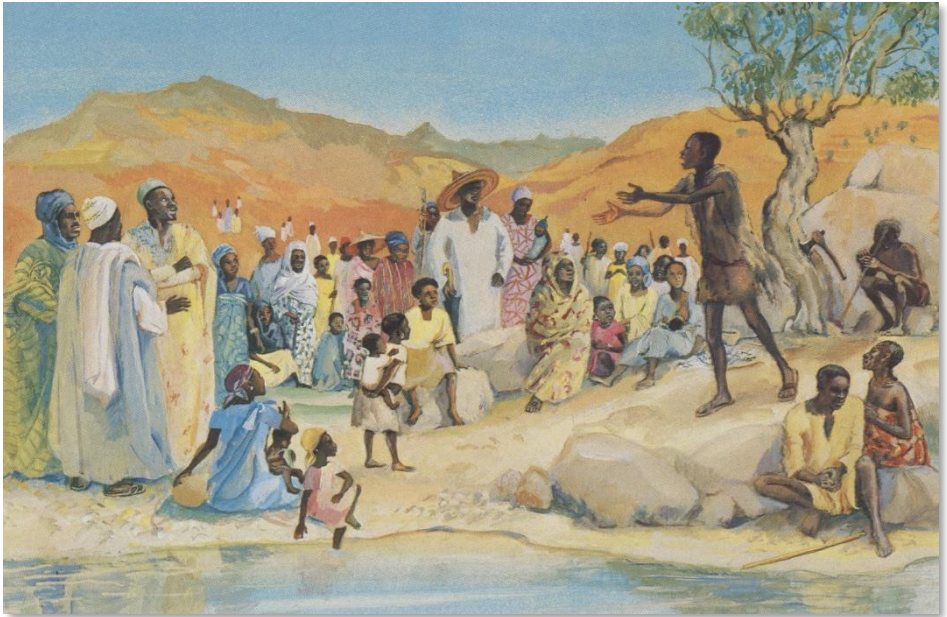




Alstonville
Anglicans

Sunday 10th December 2023

Welcome



Sharing the Good Life

We acknowledge the Bundjalung people, traditional custodians of the Land.

Our doors are open: LGBTQIA+ welcome here.

Streaming licence: CCLI 102220

Alstonville Anglicans are committed to ensuring that all people who participate in our worship, programs and ministries have a safe and rewarding experience.

Tel: 66280231 www.anglicans.live

Bank account: BSB 705 077 / Acc:00032931

10th December – 17th December

10 th December	9am	Sunday Holy Communion
	10.30am	Advent Life Group
11 th December	9am-12pm	Monday Parish Office Open
	9am-3pm	Op Shop
	10am	Anam Cara
	10am	Deadline for bulletin items
12 th December		Tuesday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Closed
13 th December		Wednesday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
	9am	Anam Cara
	9am-3pm	Op Shop
14 th December		Thursday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
	9am-3pm	Op Shop
	9.30am	Play Place (in recess)
	6pm	Anam Cara
15 th December		Friday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
	10am	Holy Communion
16 th December		Saturday
		Advent Life Group material available.
17 th December		Sunday
	9am	Holy Communion
	10.30am	Advent Life Group

This bulletin contains current announcements and the week's calendar and the sermon notes from the previous Sunday. Use our welcome booklet for info and contact details for regular activities. Keep it as a reference tool. We welcome any feedback on the booklet. [..../..../welcomeBooklet_v3.pdf](https://www.welcomesheet.com/welcomesheet/v3.pdf)

AGM 2024

The 2024 AGM will be held on Sunday 18th February. If you are responsible for submitting reports for inclusion in the Annual Report please forward them to office@anglicans.live by the middle of January.

Christmas Closures

Parish Office 22nd December – Reopens 5th February 2024

Op Shop 22nd December – Reopens 10th January 2024

Carols on the Plateau

Community Carols Friday 15th December 4-8pm.



To Make you Smile



Advent Life Groups



Advent is a time to pause and reflect on life. An advent life group is on offer on the first three Sundays of Advent from 10.30am to 11.30 am. Alternatively you may choose to do it online, either alone or with a group of friends. The films will be available at 12.35 pm on Saturdays from our

website. Our guide will be Rachel Held Evans. The film series is called "A New Family".

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/premieres/1559>

Blessing of the Ballina Labyrinth

Saturday 9 December at 9.30 am, St Mary's Ballina

You're invited to the community blessing of the labyrinth at St Mary's Anglican Church, Ballina. Walk the labyrinth, and be part of the blessing with water and bubbles.

Music by the Threshold Choir

Refreshments available from the Coffee Cart

Bring a hat/umbrella/sunscreen, and a picnic rug or chair to sit on. Bring your kids and grandkids too!

Lost Property

A bright colourful umbrella and a gold tear drop earring have been found and are in the Parish Office awaiting collection.



The holiday season is hard for those who are hurting. You are not alone.

Blue Christmas
is a gentle, contemplative service for those who are carrying pain or loss during this season of celebration.

Thursday 21st December 7pm

Alstonville Anglicans
6 The Avenue Alstonville
anglicans.live



From our family to yours
COME AS ...YOU

24 Dec 5PM
FAMILY SERVICE

24 Dec 11PM
CAROLS & COMMUNION

25 Dec 9AM
CHRISTMAS SERVICE

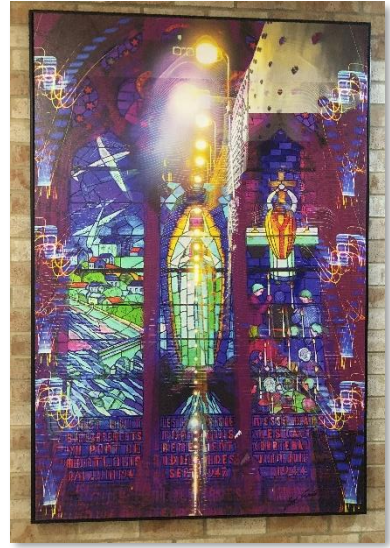
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Sermon Notes Sunday 3rd December Desiree Snyman

Advent 1B

The beginning of our Advent in Alstonville was marked with the gift of this painting that you see on the screen. The rich purple colour of the painting points to Advent. It behoves us to use this beautiful piece of art as our meditation on this first Sunday of advent. There are stories embedded in the painting. In interpreting our Advent Scriptures through the lens of this purple painting I shall try to be clear about the artist's intentions and my interpretations.

Gifted by David Smouha, the art is a synthesis of pictures taken at Mont-Lois in France. There are three distinctive panels. The central panel depicts Mary in an axis of light bursts. Notice also the Brisbane Story Bridge behind Mary, indicating that she is the bridge between the two panels on the left and the right. I see a cruciform structure to the painting formed on the vertical axis by the halos of light and across Mary as the horizontal axis. For David the colour purple is a gift of solidarity to the LGBTQIA+ community and I salute him for that and stand in solidarity with him. As a priest the colour purple is our Advent season, a time of penitence, patience and preparation. I suggest there is a marriage of the two interpretations in that our penitence may include the ways in which we have excluded and continue to exclude human diversity.



The panel on the left of Mary shows the bridge across the Loire River. According to the artist David Smouha, when German planes dropped bombs on the Loire Valley, not only was the bridge over the Loire River destroyed but all the windows throughout out the town were also blown away. The cathedral in Mont-Lois was without windows for 8 years. The bridge had been the supply line to the French resistance. For a moment reflect on the destruction depicted on the left panel, a world whose hope and future has been bombed away. I call the panel "Waiting for Justice".

Waiting for justice

While the scene on the left panel is particular to the Loire valley in France as a symbol it resonates through the centuries, forward and backwards. As a symbol reaching forward into our time the

German planes may remind us of 9/11. The destruction depicted in this left panel also highlights the current tragedies that continue to unfold as bombs are dropped in Gaza, the West Bank, Ukraine, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan. The world is still in travail and violence.

The symbol also reaches backwards to the catastrophes that pre-date the bombing during WW2 and achieves with colour and form what the scriptures communicate with prose and poetry. Isaiah 64 begs and pleads that God would tear open the heavens and come down. Notice how the flashes of light tear into the painting, waiting for the Divine to show itself amidst the fear and destruction created by the planes dropping destruction. Isaiah 64 is a plea for God to intervene in the catastrophe of human history. It is a cry from the heart of the Hebrew prophets who knew that peace was beyond human achievement and only God could save us. The context of Isaiah 64 is that after years in exile the Hebrews return home to rebuild the city and the temple, only the reconstruction and development is beyond their capacity. The exiles had returned from Babylon with dreams of reconstruction and development but nothing seemed to happen. The Temple was rubble:

Our holy and beautiful house,
where our ancestors praised you,
has been burned by fire,
and all our pleasant places have become ruins ([Is 64:11](#)).

In the light of David's purple art, the broken bridge symbolises the broken society, the broken temple and the broken city that is the source of the lament in Isaiah 64.

Similarly, the mini apocalypse of Mark 13 is written against the backdrop of the destruction of Jerusalem's Temple in about 70 AD. The temple was an Institution that the Jews thought would last forever. Sick and tired of the continues skirmishes and attacks on empire by Jewish from zealots and freedom fighters, the Romans

called from Germany their most successful general who destroyed Jerusalem and its temple decisively, ending forever the sacrificial worship at the basis of the Jewish faith. Mark 13 is a little apocalypse. Apocalyptic literature is its own art form that is often poorly treated by Western Christianity. While a full treatment of this complex scripture is beyond the scope of today's brief, suffice to say that a literal interpretation of the metaphors, symbols and imagery, like the literal interpretation of all metaphors, leads to absurdity.

Apocalyptic means uncovering or revealing or making clear. The question is, what does Mark's Jesus want to make clear for us? What is Jesus uncovering for us? What is unveiled for you in this text? What do you see as if for the first time? Mark's Jesus wants to move us out of our comfort zones and confront us with reality by ripping the cataracts out of eyes. Using the apocalyptic language of destruction there are aspects of reality that Jesus wants to make clear for us. What Jesus wants to remind us of is that nothing is permanent. Nothing lasts forever. Only God is infinite. In a moment everything can change. The consistent message is "keep watch", "stay awake", "be alert". Notice also the time frames indicated in Mark 13 and how closely they match the passion narrative: Midnight, dawn and before the cock crows.

The point of the apocalypse is to highlight a problem in human consciousness. The problem is that we attribute infinite expectations to finite properties. The message of the apocalypse is that we are not to be mesmerised by the myths and grandeur of empire whether that be Roman military might or the temple.

The message of the apocalypse is brutal. Our empires will tumble. Institutions will crumble. That which we think will last forever is as fragile as a soap bubble. You think civilisation is making progress? Jesus says every single civilisation "will be thrown down". Just ask England, Greece, Rome, Carthage, Persia. You think our research and technology

will make the world a safer place? Jesus says, "that will be reduced to mere rubble." Just ask the inventors of asbestos, cfc, and plastic. You think our creeds and faith will last infinitely? Jesus says that is man-made and not one stone of it will be left. Just ask the church in Ephesus, founded in 1 CE but destroyed in 262 CE by the Goths. To all the things we take for granted and assume will always be there, Jesus says they are coming to an end.

Many of us here are already aware that life is fragile and cataclysmic destruction in some way awaits us all. The destruction of wars depicted in our homes and on our screens is a plane ride away. Yet the climate catastrophes we have endured cast us right into the centre of Mark 13 and the left panel of the purple art. We know the reality of drought and fire and flood. We know how our lives are left in rubble as bushfires and floods swallow our houses, our loved ones, our safety. When homes are destroyed by flood and fire our sense of safety and belonging is destroyed like the temple in Mark 13. What we as individuals and as a community have been through is like the depiction on this left panel. Our lives have been bombed and the bridges that hold us together have tumbled down, stone after stone. People expect their health to flourish but an unexpected illness comes like an earthquake that unsettles even the most stable of relationships. People invest in growing their faith but learn the hard way that when something is gained something is also lost. Deeper faith, deeper prayer, growth in God does not come as cheerful progress but rather like walls coming down as what you believed in is ripped away by new experiences.

While Isaiah 64 and Mark 13 may have a sense of hopelessness theirs was not complete despair. The people in Isaiah 64 continued to confess faith in God. This is depicted in Panel 3 which I call An Advent waiting.

Panel 3: An Advent Waiting

Panel three, an advent waiting, represents the faith response to the destruction depicted in panel one. Advent is a time of pregnant

waiting, panel 3 depicts how we wait. According to Mark 13 advent waiting is waking up. We wait for the full manifestation of the cosmic Christ who is all in all in an expectant waiting. Advent people wake-up to the presence of Christ always present at the heart of matter. When we say that Advent is a period of waiting, we are not waiting for Christ the baby to be born. That already happened 2000 years ago. Nor are we waiting for the second coming Christ. The scriptures describe the coming of one like the son of man. The son of man is the fully human one. Christ 's presence is always here and now. Instead, what we are waiting for is the for the universal Christ, the cosmic Christ, to be welcomed into every human soul, into history, into the heart of matter. Our waiting is a waking up. We wake up to a new consciousness, to the reality of what God is already doing in us. What we see depicted in panel 3, an Advent Waiting, is a transformed and transforming humanity. They are participating as co-creators in their own re-creation and in the regeneration of the world. They are waking up to the reality of the cosmic Christ present within matter: within the Eucharist, within the bounty of the earth symbolized by the wine barrels made from grapes harvested in the region. They are waking up to the reality of up the cosmic Universal Christ within them as the very light they carry within their own souls and depicted by the candles carried in worship. The candles are symbols of prayer, symbols of enlightenment, a shift in consciousness as the realisation of Christ present at the heart of matter is what advent waiting and watchfulness is all about.

One cannot move from the destruction of the left panel to the faithfulness of the right panel unless there is an integral transformation, a marriage of the human and the divine. The total and integral transformation of mind, body and soul is depicted in the second panel, which I call Mary, the tree of life and the unbroken bride.

Panel 2: Mary the tree of life and the unbroken bridge.

From our perspective the precariousness of life, the fragility of our institutions, the frangibility of relationships and all we rely on may seem like death. Yet through faith these can be the birth pangs of new life. When our world is totally torn apart, and it feels like the end, a new

world is made available by God and the pain of death becomes the labour of a new world. In every ending is a new beginning. Our faith invites us to accept with detachment the impermanence of life. Some say accepting that nothing lasts forever gives us the urgency to embrace the present as the precious gift that it is. For others accepting with detachment the impermanence of life inspires patient endurance in any non-violent struggle against oppression. The icon of acceptance and saying yes to God's fullness in the present is Mary, depicted in Panel 2. Of course, this second panel is Mary the mother of God - it is after all a catholic cathedral from which David took these pictures. But it is also Miriam the sister of Moses who led Gods people to freedom. Miriam the sister of Moses and co liberator with Moses and Aaron leads the people in singing. Hers is the very first song in recorded scripture. Read it in exodus. It is also Mary Magdalene the first apostle. Mary is theotokos. God bearer. (In Advent 2,3,4 I will say more about Mary, the light halos that travel through her from the centre of her being beyond her into the cosmos and through her into the core of the earth and how they are reminiscent of the tree of life.

Mary is the ultimate guide in an advent journey because like her we too are theotokia, God bearers. We wake up to true reality, that Christ is within us, that through us the body of Christ, by God's grace, the cosmogenesis, the birth of the universe occurs, again and again.

The marriage of heaven and earth that takes place in the womb of Mary and will emerge at Christmas as Emmanuel, God with us, is same divine union that takes place within the wombs of our souls. When we learn to see the union of divine and human as the

mystery of our lives caught up in God, we too like Mary become the bridge between pain and joy, ordinary and extraordinary, magnificent and mundane reality.

Sentence of the Day

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. For the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together. Luke 3.4; Isaiah 40.5a

Collect

Merciful God,
you sent your messengers the prophets
to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation:
give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins,
that we may greet with joy
the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Mark 1:1-8

- ¹ The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- ² As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
- ³ the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight" ',
- ⁴ John the baptiser appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
- ⁵ And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.
- ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.
- ⁷ He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.
- ⁸ I have baptised you with water; but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'